

NEWS RELEASE

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California Man Charged with Multi-kilo Cocaine Conspiracy

Peoria, IL- The United States Attorney for the Central District of Illinois, Rodger A. Heaton, announced that a federal grand jury today returned an indictment charging Jose M. Zalapa, 38, of Sunnyside, California, with conspiring with others to distribute multi-kilogram quantities of cocaine over the past seven months.

According to the affidavit in support of a criminal complaint filed December 5, 2005, Illinois State Police stopped Zalapa on December 2, 2005, for a traffic violation on eastbound Interstate 80 in Henry county, Illinois. During a subsequent search of the vehicle, officers allegedly recovered approximately 42 kilograms of cocaine hidden in the vehicle's gas tank.

The indictment alleges that from about May 2005 to December 2, 2005, Zalapa conspired with others to distribute and possess with intent to distribute more than five kilograms of cocaine in the Central District of Illinois and elsewhere and that he possessed at least five kilograms of cocaine with the intent to distribute it.

If convicted, each of the offenses, conspiracy to distribute five kilograms or more of cocaine and possession with intent to distribute at least five kilograms of cocaine, carries a statutory penalty of a mandatory minimum 10 years in prison to life in prison.

The charges are the result of an investigation by the Illinois State Police with the Drug Enforcement Administration. The case is being prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorney John K. Mehochko.

Members of the public are reminded that an indictment is merely an accusation; the defendant is presumed innocent unless proven guilty.

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